

MAYANKOTE KELATH NARAYANAN

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Distinguished delegates,

1. To win a war you need to know your enemy. Sun Zi and Kautalya in ancient times had greatly emphasized this.
2. Fighting terrorism, hence, requires a proper understanding of the phenomenon of terrorism. History is both relevant and important in this context, and while terrorism is hardly a post modern phenomenon, the paradigmatic changes in the practice of terrorist violence in recent times has certain profound strategic implications.
3. Let me mention the stages one by one:
 - ❖ First, the broad sweep acquired by radical Islamist extremism today, has been in the making since the Seventies and Eighties of the 20th Century. The war against the Soviets in Afghanistan in the 1980s, was a major turning point, reflecting as it did a mix of religious fervour with fundamentalist aims. The 'Afghan jihad' attracted volunteers from across the Islamic world and helped initiate what in subsequent years would become a 'crucial mass of collective jihadist effort', based on a combination of experiences across Egypt, Syria, the Arab world, and West Asia overall. This marked the beginning of global jihad.
 - ❖ Next, new era terrorism in a sense began with the September 11, 2001 terror attacks in the US, finessed thereafter by other terror attacks including the November 26, 2008 terror attacks in Mumbai. Both signified the emergence of a different kind of threat viz., one of achieving mass casualties and large scale economic and political disruption, rather than drawing attention to primary causes. Al-Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden became the symbols of this new genus of terrorism. Between 2001 and 2011, the Al-Qaeda core and its regional affiliates, were responsible for several large scale terrorist attacks in different regions of the globe.
 - ❖ Third, As the Al-Qaeda core weakened following the elimination of Osama Bin Laden in 2011, internal tensions in the Al-Qaeda core emerged. This led to the emergence of what is currently termed as the Islamic State phenomenon.
 - ❖ Fourth, the theology of the Islamic State was not very different from that of the Al-Qaeda, both being influenced by the nihilistic teachings of the Egyptian Syed Qutub and the Palestinian Abdullah Azzam, but the ISIS combined this with the practical theology of the Afghan warlord, Jallaluddin Haqqani.
 - ❖ Fifth, the real and fundamental difference between ISIS and earlier versions of Terrorism is that the ISIS offered the vision of a new and exclusivist brand of 'puritanical' Islam; the idea of a new

Caliphate; and themes such as Hijra (migration) and bay'ah (allegiance). This has proved to be a powerful magnet in attracting Muslim youth from across the globe.

- ❖ Sixth, we must never minimize the fact that the Islamic State is a unique entity. It is very different from other terrorist organizations. It believes in holding territory. It in effect - projects an Islamic State prototype. Its recruitment techniques, the employment of 'dark propaganda' in its videos for purposes of recruitment and propaganda, its proselytization methods - over the Internet – all have created a 'virtual community' of fanatical sympathizers. Self-radicalization through methods such as this has never before been attempted. There are no 'markers' to indicate where this would finally end up.
- ❖ Seventh, violence is the leitmotif of the ISIS. Beginning with highly publicized campaigns of beheading civilian hostages, it has carried out a series of spectacular attacks across Europe and Asia, during 2015 and 2016 – too recent in our memories need any repetition.
- ❖ Eighth, the success of the ISIS has energized and led to a resurgence of radical Islamist extremism across different Continents. The Al-Qaeda which till recently was in decline, is showing signs of a revival. Both the ISIS and the Al-Qaeda are establishing relations with a host of other terrorist outfits and formations across Asia and Africa. The Al-Qaeda is even considering declaring an Islamic 'Emirate' to counter the ISIS 'Caliphate'.

4. In conclusion, it has to be acknowledged that terrorism is becoming more asymmetric, even as newer terrorist groups emerge. Both the 'ostentatious brutality' of the ISIS and the relatively 'softer' jihadism of the Al-Qaeda, poses not only a law & order threat but could produce a civilizational tsunami as well.

5. Countering the enduring myth of the ISIS viz., that of a puritan Islamist entity is not going to be easy. The threat that the ISIS posits, is that it is not just an organization, but in a far greater measure 'an idea'. When the ISIS encounters setbacks, it will morph into ISIS 2.0 and continue to stage more attacks. If the ISIS is defeated in Syria, the conditions that created the ISIS will not just disappear. A generation of disaffected youth willing to wage other future struggles already exists. They will stream out of their present habitat in Asia and Africa to other regions, including Europe and the US. The 'lone wolf' syndrome will become a very persistent threat and danger.

6. The Internet will become a crucial weapon in the hands of the ISIS, once it morphs into ISIS 2.0. Already the ISIS has plans to use the 'deep web' and the 'dark net'. The latter would in ISIS 2.0 become a vicious instrument in the hands of the ISIS to engage in cyber terrorism.

7. Terrorism will, hence, be the defining threat of not merely the present but the future generations as well. Terrorist groups in the future – as seen in the case of the ISIS – are likely to increasingly justify their brutality as 'evolutionary adaptations to an unimaginably dangerous social environment'.

8. Countering the appeal of pernicious ideas such as those of the ISIS will be the greatest challenge facing humanity. How does one fight an idea or wage an effective war against dangerous and radical philosophies such as those espoused by the ISIS? The war will have to be fought with ideas so as to defeat pernicious ideologies. This is not happening. Drone attacks are not the answer. The battle is how to defeat an idea. This is no 30 year war or a mere generation long struggle. The conflict will be a long drawn out one. The world must prepare for the longer haul.

**Justin VAÏSSE**

Generally, when we want to be pessimistic and to draw people's attention to the fact that it will be a long struggle, we say it is a 30-year war, and you are telling us it is more than a 30-year war, so it upped the ante and it is quite frightening.